

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Provincial Agricultural Association,

AT ITS

THIRTEENTH ANNUAL EXHIBITION,

AT

TORONTO, 1858,

BY THE PRESIDENT

WILLIAM FERGUSON, ESQ.,

OF KINGSTON. C. W.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE ASSOCIATION.

TORONTO:

MACLEAR & CO., PRINTERS, 17 & 19 KING STREET EAST.

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ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE PROVINCIAL AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION:

The continued ill-health of the worthy President of the Provincial Agricultural Association, D. B. Stevenson, Esq., which is sincerely to be deplored, renders him unable to assume the duties of his office. Our regrets are increased at the loss the Association sustains in his absence from the post of honour which his long experience so eminently qualified him to fill, and most particularly do I feel that loss; knowing that it devolves upon me, incompetent as I am, to occupy his place, or suitably to address this respectable assembly on the present occasion.

It must be truly gratifying to every one who takes an interest in the affairs of the Provincial Agricultural Association, only a few years in existence, to witness the satisfactory results flowing from the labours of its managers, in promoting an institution which has been productive of so much general good to all classes of the community. And this, the thirteenth Annual Exhibition, will, it is believed, from its beneficial and happy results, compare favourably with, if it does not excel any that has preceded it.

When we reflect upon the many and varied benefits accruing to the country generally, from the indefatigable exertions of the Provincial Agricultural Association, the credit due to the gentlemen who control its management, cannot be over-rated, nor the advantages to every class of society over-estimated.

And while we cheerfully accord the meed of praise so justly earned by the members of the Board for all their excellent arrangements, it is also a pleasing duty to acknowledge the valuable services so promptly and efficiently rendered by several ladies and gentlemen not directly connected with the Association, who have taken an active part in bringing the present Exhibition to so pleasing a result.

To the citizens of Toronto and all those contributing to the erection of this magnificent structure, the highest praise

is due, as the ample dimensions and appropriate arrangements of their Crystal Palace, having added much to the convenience and pleasure experienced by visitors and exhibitors, as well as giving protection to various valuable articles on exhibition.

And it is to be hoped that the example so nobly set before us, in providing such excellent accommodation for the vast throng of people assembled here, will be followed by every other place at which the Annual Exhibition may in future be held.

While science is making rapid progress throughout the civilized world, it is pleasing to see that Canada has kept her place in the general improvement, and this Exhibition displays an advancement not only in our improved breeds of domestic animals of every description, but also in Arts and Manufactures, far exceeding our most sanguine expectations.

A comparison of the number of entries, and the amount of prizes at the present Exhibition, with that of the first in 1846 and subsequent years, is sufficient evidence of the great progress the Association has made.

Notwithstanding the late temporary depression in business, proceeding from causes over which we had no control—and though the commerce in this country, as well as that of a great part of Europe and America, during a portion of last year, has to a certain extent been affected—yet Canada has cause to be proud of the soundness of her commercial position, during those trying times, which so severely tested the solvency of many of the greatest commercial and monetary institutions of both continents—and through which those of this Province acquitted themselves so creditably, without even for a moment resorting to the means which others were compelled to adopt in that emergency.

Although our great staple of export, the wheat crop, has not turned out so favourably this season as heretofore, yet the country is now comparatively prosperous, and owes much of that prosperity to our improved agricultural knowledge, and mechanical skill. And it is on the persevering industry, and properly directed energies, of those engaged in agricultural and mechanical pursuits, aided by the fostering care which the Legislature has enabled the Agricultural Association to exercise, that the future prosperity of the country will chiefly depend.

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It is within the recollection of many present, when the old-fashioned one handled plough, with wooden mould board, and with barely a few pounds of iron wrought into the form of a ploughshare, was in general use ; and almost all other implements were of a similar clumsy and rude construction. In this infant state of the country everything connected with its agriculture, arts, and manufactures was equally imperfect. Our navigation was merely such in name—the usual time occupied in steaming from Kingston to Toronto (then little York), was nearly as many days as it now takes hours ; and the average trips from Montreal to Kingston of the old-fashioned Batteaux and Durham boats, by which the commerce of the country at that time was carried on, occupied a couple of weeks in accomplishing what now takes less than a day for our noble steamers to effect ; carrying as they do, cargoes which would require whole fleets of such primitive craft to transport.

We can now look with proud satisfaction upon the gigantic strides which the country has made, and is continuing to make in the improvement of its agriculture, manufactures and commerce ; and its ultimate tendency to an exalted position rarely equalled by the older European countries.

Instead of the rude implements and crafts of former days, we can now avail ourselves of all the improvements that well-directed industry has produced, or that scientific knowledge and mechanical skill can impart, on every matter connected with our solid interests or permanent advancement.

So astonishing are the improvements with respect to agricultural implements, that our plough, the first and most important implement in all farming operations, (and which in its present improved state may be said to be perfection itself,) is doomed ere long to be superseded by those invaluable productions of modern invention, the steam-plough and steam digger ; the power and advantage of which, as labour-saving machines, particularly in open and extensive prairies, cannot at the present be fairly estimated.

The late trial of these new implements at Chester, England, under the auspices of the Royal Agricultural Society, have established the fact of their capability, with the aid of only two men, thoroughly to plough and pulverise from six to ten

acres per day, to a depth of six or more inches; thereby relieving the horse from an immense amount of exhausting labour, giving the agriculturist more perfect control over his heavy and stubborn clay soils, and placing him more at liberty to select the most suitable seasons for cultivating them.

While we admire the progress of the mother country, it is pleasing to observe the genius of Canada keeping pace with the improving spirit of the age.

All the necessary machinery required for properly effecting the various operations of the farm, the workshop and the factory, has alike undergone such valuable improvements; and yet every successive year, these Annual Exhibitions bring forth new and better implements in every department, calculated to benefit, delight, and astonish us.

While we cheerfully accord the praise and admiration due to the skill and ingenuity of the British artisan, in bringing farming and other implements to such a state of perfection as has been evinced at the Chester and other Exhibitions, it would be doing an injustice to the Canadian mechanics, manufacturers and inventors, to pass unnoticed the various useful inventions, and excellent productions of their establishments; many of which when brought into competition with those of the older countries in Europe, not only obtained the highest prizes in their respective classes, but also gained unfading laurels for our Canadian manufactures, at the world-renowned Exhibitions of London and Paris.

Placed then as are our artisans and manufacturers in this honorable position, it is becoming in us to offer hearty congratulations to all those through whose indomitable perseverance and consummate skill, the last and crowning triumph of genius has been achieved—that of successfully laying across old Atlantic's "dark unfathomed caves," that Telegraph Cable, by which the kindred nations of both continents shall, it is hoped, be inseparably and forever united in peaceful bonds of mutual friendship and prosperity.

In this recognized unity, tying as it were the old and new worlds, Canada must always feel a deep interest, and in its commercial relations will be in a position to reap great advantages. When our Trunk Railroad is completed, with unbroken connection from the sea board to the far west, and

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the prospect not even now far distant of seeing it form part of that iron band which shall connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, crossing as it is likely to do, the new British colonies soon to be organized, thereby completing a great commercial highway for the nations of the world, over which shall be transported the productions of both hemispheres, who can then venture to set bounds to the prosperity or limit the future destiny of these noble Provinces, or predict the extent of greatness to which they shall eventually arrive. Even already has a prosperous steam communication been established on a permanent footing between our sea ports and those of England and Ireland, by which the ocean passage has been so much shortened as eventually to secure for us that share of the carrying business which will build up our shipping trade and enrich the country.

Witnessing the general progress around us in all the various departments of science, arts, and manufactures, should not the agriculturist whose field of enterprise is so extensive, endeavor to keep pace with the times, in adopting those improvements of which his farming operations are susceptible, with a due regard to economical management.

Now, that he has such frequent opportunities afforded him, of obtaining all necessary information on every subject connected with his calling, through the means of well authenticated experiments and reliable treatises, essays, periodicals and agricultural journals—foremost among which stands that published by the Agricultural Association—treating as they do upon every subject in which he is interested, and by which he may improve both his mind and his means; it is to be hoped that he will not permit himself to be outstripped in the onward march and general improvement of the times.

Whilst I feel it might be considered presumption in me to fancy myself capable of enlightening this large body of intelligent farmers, mechanics, manufacturers and others, assembled on the very interesting occasion of our Annual Exhibition, many of whom, from their experience and practical knowledge, are much better qualified to speak and write on every subject connected with their respective avocations, yet I must assert, that my desire to see the general advancement of the country, is equally heartfelt with those of my fellow laborers; and with

unfeigned regard for the farming interests, I feel bound to reiterate what has often, and perhaps too truly been asserted, that the farmers as a class are less disposed to guard their own rights, or to adopt new and improved systems, however practical or advantageous to their interests than almost any other class of the community.

Is it because the business of farming in its variety of branches, offers a more limited field of research after knowledge, or less hope of gain or of honourable position in society with that of other professions? Of the reverse of this we have examples innumerable, where distinction, wealth and honour have been the reward of many whose earliest and perhaps happiest days were devoted to the pursuits of the farm, and the study of nature in all its beauties of animal and vegetable life.

Blest with general good health, from the nature of his avocations requiring the operations of the farm to be conducted in the open air, sharing in no stinted measure the bounties which the Giver of All Good bestows as the reward of honest labour—the husbandman generally displays too often an easy contentedness in matters of state polity with reference to the interests of his own class, almost bordering on indifference.—And although it may not be desirable that the farmer should, to the prejudice of his business, turn a mere politician, yet, surely there is a broad common ground upon which the agriculturists of every shade of politics, could unite in endeavoring to better themselves, and protect their interests as a class, without infringing upon the rights or privileges of others.

While the professional, commercial, manufacturing and mechanical portions of the community, often in their respective spheres, with praiseworthy efforts unite for the promotion of their mutual interests, no good reason can be shown why the farming portion of our people, who are really among the chief producers of our country's wealth, should, through diffidence or apathy, allow their interests to be overlooked or slightly treated in the councils of the country.

It is true that the wisdom of our Legislature has been occasionally evoked in favour of the farming interests, and that good has resulted in the fostering care of the Government over those interests; but greater good would be achieved, did the

farmers send more of their own class to represent them in the Legislature ; men who would have for their object the general advancement of the country, instead of wasting time in wrangling over the abstruse and unintelligible political and party questions of the day.

At the same time that the agriculturist would set forth his claims to fostering protection, he should by no means seek to deprive any other class of the community of their just rights, —for all have rights. The interests of commerce, arts, and manufactures, are of equal importance, and inseparably connected with that of agriculture ; so, that if commerce is paralyzed, agriculture, arts, and manufactures are equally affected ; if not in protested obligations, it will be in the languor and stagnation which take place in the markets and workshops. And it may be truly said, that if commerce is the handmaid of agriculture, so are arts and manufactures kindred spirits and indispensable to both. And if the agriculturists may be said to be particularly dependant upon any one of these branches of human industry more than another, it is to the artisan and the manufacturer. To them he must look for a supply of implements and machinery to carry on his farming operations, in exchange for a portion of the surplus produce of his farm, and by which means their mutual interests are thus promoted.

These reflections naturally lead to the consideration of the propriety of *creating a home market*, for the surplus of the field, the forest and the mine, in their many ramifications—and what object is fraught with deeper interest to the whole community ? The sustaining power of Great Britain, whose commerce encircles the globe, rests on her multifarious manufactures, which from their cheapness find a market in every habitable portion of the earth's surface, defying almost any successful competition.

This ascendancy has been attained through cheapness of labour, and a long period of protection to the produce of her fields and workshops, until the perfection of her manufacturing machinery enabled her to compete most successfully with the manufactures of every other country, and finally to adopt the principle of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market.

The same policy adopted by the New England States, has also placed their manufactures, in many instances, on a par with older countries, and not only has made a home market for the produce of their farms, but has enabled them to take in exchange for their manufactured articles, a large amount of the surplus produce of the neighbouring States and Canada. Thus, from a wise course of long continued protection to their native manufactures, their workshops and factories have now attained such a degree of superiority that they no longer require protective aid. And as a proof of the extent of their manufactures, a recently published statistical paper shows that every eighth man in Massachusetts is a shoemaker; and it is asserted that one factory established for the manufacture of watches alone, turns out twenty thousand watches, both better time-keepers, and of more durable structure than any imported, and at one half their cost.

Seeing the benefits of the protective system, and possessing, as we do, inexhaustible water powers, equal to, if not superior, to any to be found elsewhere, why should not the fostering care of our Legislature be more earnestly directed to a subject so deeply affecting the prosperity of the whole community; and that encouragement given to native manufactures, which would tend eventually to build them up, and thereby create a home market for our farm produce.

When the far-seeing political economist inquires into the cause of a nation's commercial greatness, he traces it to its export and import trade; and England's commanding monetary position, (and money is power,) will be found to consist in the immense excess of her exports over her imports, thereby clearly shewing the balance of trade to be in her favour; which excess is paid for in the bullion of other countries. This eminent and commanding position she is enabled to maintain through the perfection of machinery, making her renowned factories the workshops of the world; enabling her to supply the warehouses of our merchants with not only the various articles of every day use, but the finer articles and more costly luxuries for those who can afford to purchase them, aided as she is by her immense commercial navy, to carry those productions to the most distant markets of the world.

It may be alleged that this country is not sufficiently ad-

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vanced, to require or maintain manufacturing on an extensive scale ; and that the reclaiming of our forests, and a better cultivation of our cleared lands, should for many years to come be our chief object. This course might be found to answer, if the whole immigration to this country consisted of farming people ; but as it does not, and as a very large number of those annually arriving at our ports, consists of artizans in the various mechanical branches, from the principal manufacturing towns, and places of the whole world, why should the suicidal course be persisted in, of encouraging or necessitating them to take to farming as the mode of earning their future living, or in the event of your not doing so, obliging them for the want of employment in their own line of business, to seek it in the neighbouring republic, where with their skill and industry they contribute to build up the manufactures of foreign competitors at the expense of our own, and at the same time essentially advance the farming interests of that country by increasing the home consumption of the products of the farm.

Thousands of the most skilful artizans and workmen from the Old World, are year after year following their friends, and seeking homes on this side of the Atlantic ; and for want of suitable employment for them under our national flag, they as regularly leave our shores for the United States, where, with the wealth of their skill and labour, they enrich that country and make happy homes for themselves.

As a proof of what Canada has done with the little encouragement which the Legislature has afforded her manufactures, we have but to examine within the limits of this Exhibition ground, and we perceive an excellence displayed in almost every department of Arts and Manufactures, in many instances not excelled by the older countries of Europe and America.

And to what eminence our manufactures might arrive if properly encouraged, seeing the extensiveness of our forests, and the richness and profusion of our mineral productions, not even the most sanguine can predict. Notwithstanding the discouraging circumstances under which some of our infant manufactures are labouring against foreign importations, yet many are still successfully working, not only against want of proper protection, but also against the absence of that patronage to which home manufactures have so just a claim.

While we view the very excellent, highly finished and powerful locomotives on exhibition here, the production of the manufacturing establishment of that enterprising gentleman, James Morton, Esq., Kingston, although it produces in our breasts thrilling emotions of pleasure in witnessing the telling superiority of our infant manufactures in this branch of art, yet here again it is painful to observe, that encouragement is not given to this important branch of our Canadian Manufactures necessary to establish them permanently, and which would have the effect not only of attracting hundreds of superior workmen from other parts, who would lay out the chief part of their earnings among us, but also of increasing the circulating medium of the Province, by tens of thousands of pounds, now sent to foreign countries, for what are generally said to be inferior articles.

My limited time will not admit of enumerating the many excellent productions of our workshops, in the various branches of Manufactures in which they are engaged; but it may not be amiss generally to notice, that many articles of importance in the trade of the country, (specimens of which are here exhibited,) which can be produced to advantage and profit, both to the manufacturer and consumer, when ready sales can be effected, have been overlooked, and inferior articles from other nations substituted.

It is to be hoped, however, that as our manufactured articles continue to advance in excellence, as they are now doing, and their merits become more generally known, their durability and substantial construction will ensure for them that preference in the home market which they deserve.

In addition to the many articles of common use which might with great advantage be grown and manufactured here, such as Hemp and Tobacco, that of Flax demands particular attention, and would, doubtless, with the necessary skill and management applied to its proper cultivation, be productive of much profit and real benefit, not only to those engaged in its cultivation, but also to those who might undertake its manufacture.

It is known that the flax plant is indigenous to several parts of this continent; and with proper cultivation will grow to perfection in almost every part of Canada; and when manu-

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factured produces a fabric which could with advantage be substituted for cotton goods in a variety of articles of daily domestic use. The very excellent illustrated lecture, given by Professor Wilson some years ago at Montreal, has passed over almost unheeded; and it is much to be regretted that so little advantage has been taken of the valuable information which he so kindly and freely imparted.

It will be remembered that that gentleman was sent by Her Majesty the Queen, on behalf of England, to the opening of the United States National Exposition of Arts and Manufactures at the Crystal Palace, New York; and that he afterwards honoured us by visiting the Lower Canada Provincial Agricultural Show of 1853; on which occasion he delivered a scientific lecture on the culture, and also the manufacture of flax from the raw material of straw; and from the intelligent and lucid manner in which the useful properties of the flax plant were described, and the nutritious and fattening qualities contained in the seed and albumen of the plant for feeding stock explained; and also the value it possesses as an article of commerce, and its general usefulness in the many ways in which it can be applied for domestic purposes, it excites surprise that his suggestions have not since been acted upon.

If the expensiveness of the improved machinery required for dressing the raw material and fitting it for exportation or manufacture, has been the cause of neglecting its cultivation, it is to be hoped that the difficulty will be surmounted by the Board of Agriculture taking the matter into their hands, and applying, if necessary, to the Legislature for aid to encourage the growth and manufacture of a staple, that would produce such permanent advantages to the country. And what fitter time, now that the culture of wheat is becoming more and more uncertain, to introduce in its stead, at least to a limited extent, that which would give a much more certain and profitable return, and confer lasting benefit to the agriculturist and the manufacturer, as it is confidently believed that the seed of the flax alone, exceeds in value that of the wheat crop, acre for acre, without taking into account the fibre, which is the most valuable part.

When we examine the trade and customs returns of the

Province published by the Government, we find that cotton goods in a variety of forms are annually introduced into the country; not only from England, but also from the United States, in such quantities, and of so great an amount in value, as to cause astonishment at our supineness in continuing to encourage a foreign material which draws so heavily upon the industrial resources of the country—the annual importations exceeding five millions of dollars. By substituting for cotton, where practicable, a fabric of our own manufacture composed of flax, to supply us in the many uses to which cotton is applied, a great portion of this very large sum of money would be annually saved to the country, and a new branch of industry created among our people in its manufacture, by means of which a new market would be established for a considerable amount of our surplus provisions, and also profitable employment secured for an increased and thriving population.

Of the importance of the article of flax to the manufacturer as well as the agriculturist, Professor Wilson, in his able lecture alluded to, showed that at that period "England had at work 168,000 spindles in its manufactures, while the United States had but 50,000," but were, as he remarked, "rapidly increasing." And he adds, "that out of 20,000,000 yards of linen annually manufactured in England, 8,000,000 had been sent to the American Continent," showing thereby the importance to us of encouraging the growth and manufacture of this most useful material. And the learned gentleman, in showing the large amount of foreign raw flax used, further says, "that for the production of the quantity of raw material annually imported into England, it requires the growth of 800,000 acres of land.

It is ascertained that the flax plant will grow to perfection where cereal crops can be cultivated; and with even less exhausting effects to the soil than that of wheat; but the apparent difficulty to the grower is the want of the necessary modern machinery for producing the putrefactive fermentation, or rotting process; which might be of such construction as to be capable of removal from place to place, as most of our threshing machines are, and by which means the raw material could be cheaply prepared for the manufacturer.

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Should its manufacture into the finer and more costly articles of commerce, not be attainable at present, for want of enterprising capitalists among us, or through a deficiency of labour, by proper encouragement given to flax culture for export only—now that we have ocean steamers coming to our very doors—a new opening for the enterprise of our people presents itself, which would be found more remunerative than the growing of wheat under present circumstances; and its adaptability for exportation when merely rough dressed or scutched, and being much less liable to injury in its transport across the seas than cereal crops, gives it a decided advantage for ocean transit.

In estimating the comparative advantages over the many other productions of the field, that those obtain who are engaged in the cultivation of flax as a staple, many instances might be adduced, but the following statement from the "Irish Farmers' and Gardeners' Magazine," shows the fact to be indisputable.

A Mr. Woltenhohen sowed in the month of April fifteen Irish acres with Dutch flax seed. These fifteen acres produced 345 bushels of excellent seed, or 23 bushels per acre, worth 7s. 6d. per bushel—£129 7s. 6d.

He had of scutched flax. 6 tons 11 cwt. 1 qr., or

1,050 stones of 14lb. each, worth 7s. 6d... £393 15 0

Making in all..... £522 2 6

Or per acre..... £34 7 6

It may not be out of place to mention here that Ulster, the most northerly of the four provinces of Ireland, still maintains by its flax and linen trade a population exceeding two millions, notwithstanding the very large numbers who have emigrated from that section of the country.

Among the many causes why the Canadian farmer could make *not only* the growth of flax, but also its manufacture into linen profitable, we have the certainty of a four months' winter, during which period very little out-door occupation engages the time of the farmer and his family. This season of the year could be profitably employed in preparing the

raw material for the manufacturer; and where it might be deemed advisable to use the handloom at home, what more fitting season for such employment than our dreary winters' days and evenings, where by the comfortable hearth the busy hum of the spinning-wheel, and the lively motion of the weaver's shuttle, would, besides the pecuniary advantages it would bring, give life and animation to that season of the year when the out-door world presents but a dreary sameness and the vegetable kingdom seems touched with the finger of death.

If, in her future destiny, Canada expects to succeed in maintaining a self-sustaining position, when brought into competition with those of the extensive wheat growing prairie lands of the Western regions, aided, as they soon will be, with all the modern appliances of steam ploughs now being so effectually used in England (and certainly well adapted to the prairie country), she must eventually look to the resources which her magnificent water-powers present for manufacturing purposes, and bring them into use as auxiliaries towards maintaining her progress and position among the surrounding States and Colonies.

And what fitter period for exercising man's best energies, now that science has opened up so many avenues for the display of his skill and enterprise; and the blessings of peace restored not only to civilized Europe, but also to those eastern countries whose idolatry and intolerant fanaticism and bigotry had well nigh trampled down true Liberty and even Religion itself. The advantage gained to commerce by throwing open to trade the ports of the celestial Empire, will be felt throughout the civilized world, opening up as it does, new fields for the enterprizes of the pioneers of civilization—the trader and missionary. And while we give to Britain and her ally the full credit of being the means of accomplishing so great a good to the whole human family, let us not forget that to the Great Disposer of events we are indebted for all the blessings we enjoy.

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